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THE MAD MIDSHIPMAN



BY
GASTON BARNUM
last
edition.

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The Mad Midshipman

OR,

THE PIRATE'S LAST CRUISE.

By GASTON GARNE,

Author of "The Haunted School-House," "The Lieutenant's Revenge," etc.

CHAPTER I.

BLACKBEARD.

To the northward of Carlisle Bay, at the head of which is the port of Nassau, there stands an old fort, in early days the stronghold of Blackbeard, one of the most infamous of all the desperate bands of buccaneers who were the scourge of the Bahamas and Caribbean seas.

It is a legend concerning the fort which I am about to place before the reader in narrative form.

The main incidents are true, and but slight liberty has been taken with facts by the imagination of the novelist.

* * * * *

A brilliant, burning day in June, with a thick, fetid, fever-breeding haze low-lying over the swamps that surrounded Port Royal, creeping up and surrounding the cemetery—that cemetery which every morning received fresh victims from the unfortunate whites who inhabited the island.

A thick, burning, fever-blasted day, with white baked earth and brazen sea, so that even the Congo negro from the white man's grave lay gasping in the sun.

the harbor, surrounded by numerous other

vessels, rode a ten-gun brig, with yards squared to a nicety, and sails furled Bristol fashion.

Awnings were stretched over her deck, and underneath were British seamen sweltering and incapable, while the white ensign hung from the monkey-gaff like a dish-cloth.

This was His Majesty's ship "Porcupine," waiting for her consort, the "Vesuvius," to go in search of that desperate pirate, Blackbeard, and "sink, burn and destroy."

A youth of sixteen summers came out of the cabin with telescope slung at his back, and mounted the rigging with the agility of a cat, notwithstanding the torrid heat.

Arrived in the maintop his glass swept seaward for a long while, but no sail rewarded his search.

He shut up his glass with a sharp, impatient snap, and once more sought the comparative shelter of the quarter-deck awning.

This officer is our hero.

He was known as Rory to his chums, and to the rest of the ship's company as the Mad Midshipman.

Others had come on that fatal station and had made interest to get home again; Rory had stayed on.

Commander after commander had offered Rory a berth, for his sterling abilities as a first-class seaman were well known, but he had steadily refused them.

When discipline relaxed, and officers went off on mad riots ashore which carried them feet first to the cemetery outside the town, Rory was ever ready to take their duty.

His vigilance never relaxed, and his eyes had ever in them that yearning, haunting look as of some one constantly expecting something that must come at last.

In person he was an Apollo, with a chest like Hercules, and a waist like a spider.

A profusion of coal-black hair fell carelessly down his shoulders, and his black eyes glowed, when he was excited, like coals of fire.

"Still on the lookout, Rory?" asked an officer, coming up from the cabin in shirt-sleeves, and light jean trousers. "It's no use, my dear fellow, we are, as usual, on a false scent; and as for the 'Vesuvius' coming, I am sure I hope she may stay out of this infernal hole until this terrible heat passes over."

"She should be here anyhow; we are losing time, and, perhaps, while we are dwelling in this pest-hole, the scoundrel may be burning and destroying in the South Pacific."

"Are you coming to the governor's ball to-night? I should like to see you relax that constant watchfulness, Rory; it is becoming a monomania with you."

"When he is swinging at yonder yard-arm, and not before," replied the young reefer.

"What can induce you to be so mad after the capture of this fellow, Rory? Of course I can understand the excitement of it, if it comes in the way of duty, but the idea of your giving up all chances of advancement, to say nothing of the delights of the Mediterranean station, to remain in this pest-hole for the mere purpose of capturing a pirate, seems to me little short of madness."

"It may seem so," said Rory, with gloomy brow; "but I believe that Blackbeard and none other has done me the greatest injury that mortal man can do another. I have sworn to hunt him down, and if it takes me a lifetime to do it I will do so."

"Well, my dear fellow, I can only commend your resolution. I wish to Heaven they'd given you

command of the brig and let me go home; you have passed a year, and I don't see why your age should keep you back."

"Have no fear on that score," replied Rory. "I don't want my epaulets before I have earned them."

The commander of the "Porcupine" said something of a complimentary nature by way of reply, and then strolled lazily to his cabin to try and sleep away the afternoon, while Rory continued his monotonous walk up and down the quarter-deck.

"Hey, Massa Rory, me want 'peak to you," said a tall black man, approaching him and scarcely lifting his voice above a whisper.

"What is it, Gumbo?"

"Gumbo hab suffing ob special inportunate to tell massa."

It was Gumbo's peculiarity always to choose the longest words he could find in the English language, having little regard to their meaning.

But he generally contrived to make himself understood, for all that.

He was Rory's hammock man and devoted slave, having had his life saved by that young gentleman on the Gold Coast at the moment when he was about to be served up for a neighboring king's dinner.

Gumbo was a king in his own country, but he preferred the limited power of a boatswain's mate on board an English man-of-war to the precarious tenure of despotism in that happy land.

"Gumbo was on terra firma last night wif de liberty men, and um speculate dat um hab inbestigated Blackbeard."

"Ha!" exclaimed Rory.

"Um hab only um suspisications," continued Gumbo, "but um hab reasons to believe um indebilitate."

Rory knew that it was no use trying to get anything out of the black unless he let him run on.

It was a peculiar point with Gumbo that the more excited he was the longer words he used, as if he was trying to dam up a stream.

But at the culminating point an overflow generally occurred and out came the information in a rush of simple and forcible language.

"Um was inebriatum wif de liberty men last night and um went to the resort of dissipation. 'Hell's Kitchen.' Um observe

an' um tink for sure dat um leader am de pirate. Gumbo he play possum an' listen wif both of um aricular pendages wide open. Um hear um say um wanted hands to sail wif convoy an' um gib plenty ob prize money. Where de merchantman git de prize money if um no pirate?"

And Gumbo, having finished his speech, helped himself to a huge mouthful of nigger-head.

"What um good merchant capting doin' at 'Hell's Kitchen?" added Gumbo, by way of a clincher when he had refreshed himself by expectorating over the side.

"Hell's Kitchen" was well known as one of the worst sinks of iniquity in Port Royal, a resort for slavers, buccaneers, cut-throats, and in short for all the disreputable characters of Port Royal, from a deserter to a runaway slave.

The men were served by slave girls of every hue, from ink-black to white, who pandered to their baser appetites.

It was full of traps and blind doors and cellars, so that should a deserter once secure its retreat he was safe even from the press-gang.

Rory reflected for a moment.

Now, if the information conveyed by Gumbo were true, despite all his vigilance, Blackbeard might be in the harbor with his vessel disguised; or what was easier than for him to lie off in the offing, coming up with the sea-breeze and running out of sight again when morning broke?

"I'll find out for myself," said Rory. "Gumbo, you go on shore with me to-night. We will ferret out this matter."

In the tropics there is no twilight, the sun drops into the sea, and in an instant the landscape is plunged into Cimmerian darkness.

Rory wrote a note to his commander, and placed it on his table.

It was to this effect:

"If I do not return, you may know that I am on the track of Blackbeard. I have taken Gumbo with me. Make no investigation, or you may chance to spoil my plans. If possible do not let it be known that I have left the ship."

Having made this communication to his superior, Rory slipped over the side, and with his faithful Gumbo was rowed ashore.

"Now, Gumbo," he whispered, as they plunged into the water, "to win or die!"

Gumbo replied by showing his white teeth.

CHAPTER II.

"HELL'S KITCHEN."

"HERE am de boss place for um sangaree," said Gumbo, as they stopped before a low shanty, whose flaring lights illuminated the dingy road, streaming out through the jalousies.

As he spoke he kicked them open, and the twain entered a long, low room, filled with men, girls, smoke, and the reeking fumes of alcohol.

Long before they had arrived opposite the door their appearance had been signaled, and had there been aught suspicious about them; they would perhaps have found the place empty—perhaps have received a knife in their ribs.

Circumstances decided the course to be pursued in this matter.

They walked leisurely up the room, the cynosure of a hundred eyes, to where sat a broad, squarely-built man, with a long black beard. Right ear he had none, and a scar stretched athwartships on his face from the ear to his mouth.

A brilliant row of white teeth contrasted strongly with his black beard, and gave him a sort of satanic appearance, as if the devil in merry mood had taken upon himself to assume human shape.

"Sit down there, Gumbo," cried Rory, snatching a chair from under a recumbent pirate, "and you sit down there, Nick, where you can have a good look at things in general."

He was addressing nobody, apparently, and yet he placed the chair and sat opposite it, as though there was somebody in it.

"What will you have, Nick?" he continued, addressing the empty chair. "Sangaree? Right you are. Here, one of you! three glasses and a gallon of sangaree."

"What the deuce do you mean by taking my chair?" growled the ejected sailor, staggering to his feet, knife in hand.

"Nick wants it, my good man," cried Rory, composedly. "Go and lie down somewhere else, or you'll get into trouble. Nick always has what he wants. Don't you, Nick?"

"Go to the devil with your Nick!" cried the sailor. "There ain't any one there."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

A perfect peal of demoniac laughter came from the seat of the chair; and while all in the room started back in sudden terror, Rory joined in the chorus, observing that while over a dozen men in the crowd had put their hands to the butts of their pistols they now withdrew them hastily.

Blackbeard alone preserved an appearance of ferocious courage.

Drawing a pistol, he lipped a great oath—"If it were the devil himself I am not afraid of him."

He pointed his pistol at the chair and fired.

The ball sped oward through the back of the chair and to the heart of a little Creole girl, who was coming with the drinks.

She dropped without uttering a sound, while, as the report of the pistol died away, again came that satanic laughter.

Deaths were common enough in that unholy place, so that the mere murder was no great matter; and for the poor child, doomed to a life of appalling cruelty and infamy, it was a happy release.

But the effect on the pirates was magical. Some turned and ran out with a yell, others stood shaking, while Blackbeard himself returned the pistol to his belt with trembling hand.

"Send along some one else with that sangaree," cried out Rory. "That counts one to Nick. Give us your flipper, mate," to Blackbeard. "I like a fellow with pluck, but the bullet's not coined yet that will shoot Nick or me."

"It won't?" cried Blackbeard. "By——!" and he drew his other pistol.

"Fire away!" said Rory, and again that peal of wild laughter filled the room.

"Who are you?" gasped the pirate king, relaxing his hold of the pistol.

"I'm Rory, the Mad Reefer. They call me mad because my friend Nick is always with me, and no one can see him but me."

"I'm not scared of man nor devil," said Blackbeard, in a quaking voice, "but you seem to be a good fellow. Have a drink with me," and he looked anxiously towards the chair.

"Certainly," said Rory. "This is my friend Jumbo, and this is my friend Nick. Captain Blackbeard, Mr. Nick."

"Ha, you know me?"

"Of course I know you," said Rory, calmly;

"and I know you want a first officer. I'm come to be your first officer."

"How did you know that?" cried Blackbeard, the perspiration streaming from him.

"Nick told me," said Rory, calmly. "Nick knows everything. You can't fool him. Come here, all of you lads, and drink success to the last cruise of the 'Tarantula.'"

"And the slip we gave the 'Vesuvius,'" said Blackbeard.

"Ha, ha! Ho, ho!" cried the voice from the chair.

"Look here," said Blackbeard, "tell your friend Mr. Nick to keep his laugh to himself. I don't like it."

"Laugh!" came an echo right back to where the captain was sitting, and made his hair stand up.

"If you're going to be pals, be pals," cried Blackbeard, in a quivering voice. "I'm not scared of man nor—nor—your friend either; and keep him in his chair, too," he cried, with another oath, as he saw Rory's eyes slowly travel from the chair and look over his shoulder.

"Don't you worry," said Rory. "Nick is a good sort of fellow when you know him, and wouldn't hurt a hair of your head, but he's a bit mischievous to-night."

"How did you come across him, and how long has he been with you?" asked the pirate, evidently still very ill at ease.

"I'll tell you that later on, when you know more of me," answered Rory; "at present, mum's the word. Ha—stash!"

"What's the matter?"

"He's gone."

"I'm glad to hear it," said the pirate.

"Here's to our better acquaintance, Blackbeard."

"With all my heart," said Blackbeard, whose courage began to revive. "Come, lads, all hands to splice the mainbrace. Our friend Nick has found it too hot for him with Captain Blackbeard."

"Not so loud, my friend," said Rory, "or some of the Porcupines might chance to hear you."

"Durn the Porcupines!" roared Captain Blackbeard. "I could sink her with one broadside if it wasn't for those forts."

Louder and louder grew

ery, till at last the captain staggered to his feet and announced that it was time to go on board.

"I am going with you, captain," said Rory, "and you'll find me as smart a sailor as ever trod a plank, and as good at cutting throats as yourself."

"Ha, ha!" roared the pirate. "Mad or not, you are one of the right sort for Captain Blackbeard; but, I say, your friend Mr. Nick is not coming, is he?"

"You needn't worry about him," said Rory. "He never appears unless my life is threatened."

"Ha, you mean——"

"That I am to have a long life and a merry one until my time comes, in spite of bullet or steel."

"Would he give me the same terms?" asked Blackbeard.

"If you choose to take them," answered Rory.

"And what are they?"

"I advise you to let well alone," said Rory, "or it may end with a word that has the same sound, but not the same first letter."

"That is?"

"H."

Captain Blackbeard led the way on board in silence.

CHAPTER III.

ON BOARD THE "TARANTULA."

AT the end of a half-sunken wharf, which led down from "Hell's Kitchen," they found a launch with two men in her, lying off waiting.

A short hail brought them alongside, and Captain Blackbeard, with his sons in a more or less state of intoxication, tumbled on board.

"Give way!" cried the pirate king, in a low savage tone of command.

Rory remarked that caution was a part of these men's nature.

Although they were all more or less drunk, not a word was spoken above a whisper.

All hands laid down under the gunwale, and only two men rowed.

"Why don't you make 'em all row?" cried Rory.

"I'm afraid of their seeing me from that brig," answered Blackbeard, with an oath. "They've got devilish sharp eyes on board of her; I should like to

send some of them out. It was only

the other night I rowed aboard in a bit of a shindy state, and the next day off comes a boat to the 'Turtle Dove,' with a dapper little midshipman on board, to know who had been making all the row and who were the men I had taken on board."

Rory remembered that he had had his suspicions aroused on that occasion, and had requested the captain to send a midshipman to inquire the cause.

"I fooled the reefer nicely," continued Blackbeard, "by pretending that I was a Dutch skipper, and the crew had got drunk. If he had only seen about fifty of my tigers down in the orlop deck waiting for a chance, he wouldn't have gone back with such a smug face."

"Lucky for you, my man, and perhaps for myself too, that I didn't come," said Rory to himself.

"There are your quarters on board the 'Turtle Dove,'" said Blackbeard, pointing to a state-room off the cabin. "My last first officer didn't please me, and so I shot him," and he smiled grimly. "That black fellow with you can go forward among the men."

"He'll do where he is," said Rory. "There's a lower bunk that will suit him."

"Please yourself," cried the captain. "I hate niggers."

"When we are better acquainted I'll tell you the reason why I keep him near me," said Rory.

And the captain heard a low, chuckling laugh behind him.

"Something to do with your friend?" he asked. Rory nodded his head.

"Well, I'll be off," cried the captain, scuttling out of the cabin with much precipitation. "We weigh anchor at daybreak. I ain't afraid of man nor—your friend, but treat me well, and I'll treat you well."

So saying he disappeared.

"Sleep across the cabin door, Gumbo," said Rory. "He's only half convinced, and to-morrow morning he'll be putting this night's work to rum."

At daybreak the captain advanced cautiously to the state-room door.

He had slept off the effects of last night's debauch.

"I'll teach that lunatic chap to try and scare Captain Blackbeard," he said, and turned the handle of the door softly.

It refused to yield.

"Barricaded yourself in, did you?" he muttered. "That's not cute enough for Captain Blackbeard." He touched a panel, and it flew up, revealing the form of Rory on the bed.

"Die!" cried the captain, as he pulled the trigger.

A loud report, and again that low, mocking laughter.

While Captain Blackbeard stood aghast the state-room door opened, and Rory appeared with something extended in his open hand.

"Here is your bullet, Captain Blackbeard," said he. "Try it on something easier to pierce than my head."

"I only meant it as a practical joke," cried the captain. "I wanted to wake you up."

"Just so," said Rory, "and you sent a bullet through my skull to do it like you did that of the last officer, only, don't you see, bullets don't work so easy on me. Now let's understand one another. You try any more of those tricks on one who is disposed to be your friend as long as you give him plenty of excitement and pleasure, and——"

Rory stopped speaking, and looked over the captain's shoulder in a way that sent the chill down his back.

"And I wouldn't give you two seconds' purchase of your life."

"Come and have a drink. Let by-gones be by-gones amongst friends," said the captain. "I thought you played a trick on me when I was a bit drunk last night. Then I'll introduce you to the crew."

What had appeared so marvelous to Captain Blackbeard was in reality very easy to Rory and his friend Gumbo.

Well knowing the treacherous nature of the man, they had carefully examined the cabin, and discovered the panel by means of some splintered wood-work, where a bullet had evidently passed through before.

Rory observed that it was exactly in line with a man's head lying in the bunk.

He and Gumbo had rigged up a dummy man in the bunk, and had then taken it turn and turn about to watch.

The captain had scarcely taken a step from the cabin ere they detected his approach.

The reader is acquainted with what followed.

Having finished their morning draught, the three went on deck, and word was passed, "All harbor hands on deck."

Rory had time to look about him.

He found himself apparently on board an old sugar scow.

She had high poop and fore-castle, with old-fashioned lofty bulwarks, and topgallant rails running fore and aft.

Her bows were bluff and round, and her heavy tops looked big enough for a man-of-war.

All her rigging was untidy and slovenly in the extreme, and her decks were lumbered up with water-casks and boats turned upside down.

A sooty galley just behind the foremast completed the picture.

But Rory's quick eye detected the rake of her masts and length of her yards.

The stumpy topgallant masts looked as much proportioned to the jaunty topmasts as a rose to a hangman's button-hole.

About thirty slovenly-looking men came up and scowled at Rory.

The captain briefly introduced him, and Rory told them to weigh anchor.

Creak, creak! went the rusty-looking windlass, and the men moved as slowly as hogs in armor.

Rory cast his eye to where the "Porcupine" lay.

He could just make her out through the morning loom.

"Shall I hail her?" he said to himself. "No, I might lose that for which I have been working for years."

The captain broke in upon Rory's solitude.

"I've half a mind to give her a broadside as I go out," he said. "If I could get my heavy guns to bear, I would sink her before she could return a shot."

"And get sunk in return by the fire of the fort and the 'Vesuvius' frigate, that may be at this very moment beating in."

"You might be right," said the captain, "but it is just a thing after my own heart."

"Well, don't do it," said Rory.

"What are you afraid of?"

"My friend Nick," said Rory. "He is at my elbow now, and he is never there except there is danger."

"Short a-peak!" came the cry, and then the top-sails were slowly hoisted.

They went groaning up the mast as if they had never got up there before.

They were sheeted home, and the jib and trysail hoisted.

Slowly she broke ground and went round on her keel, moving slowly off before the morning breeze for the harbor mouth.

As she gained the offing, and Blackbeard swept the horizon with his glass, the pirate captain's mood changed like magic.

"All hands on deck!" he cried. "Take the swaddling clothes off the beauty!"

In an instant a marvelous change occurred.

Down came the lumbering topgallant masts, and in their place ran up raking poles, with royal and skysail mast overhead.

Out ran studding-sail booms, and topgallant-royal and skysail yards were crossed in a trice.

Ring-tails, monkey-tails, sky-scrapers, water-sails spread out by magic, as the "Tarantula" bounded over the billows towards the Caribbean Sea.

Nor was the change on deck less marvelous.

Away went poop and forecastle, and lofty bulwark; away went galley and boats, as useless lumber.

Behold! in half an hour, a long, narrow brig, painted black, with a broad red stripe round her, a flush deck fore and aft, so white that you could dine off it.

She was pierced for twenty guns, and a pivot thirty-two, which stood amidships, and could be swung in every direction almost.

They had been hidden by the boats and sham galley.

The former were hung over the side to their davits, and now the "Turtle Dove," transformed once more into the terrible "Tarantula," the scourge of the Western Ocean, walked the water like a thing of life.

Her decks were peopled by a swarm of fierce-faced sailors of every race and nation, who had come up from their confinement in the orlop deck.

And their language and gorgeous dress was as varied as their nationality.

Yellow, and blue, and red, and silk, and satin of every hue, made the deck a picture of beauty.

"He is right," muttered Rory to himself. "He would have sunk us at a broadside."

"What was that you said?" asked Captain Blackbeard, with a sharp, suspicious glance at his new first officer.

Had he heard the remark?

If so, our hero's fate was sealed.

No amount of jugglery could save him.

"I said," continued Rory, calmly, "he could have sunk us in a broadside."

"Who could?" demanded the pirate.

"The governor of the fort," responded Rory.

"Forts don't fire broadsides," said Blackbeard, giving him a suspicious look from under his shaggy eyebrows.

"That's a matter of opinion," said Rory, carelessly. "Forward there, forecastle-men; rig out the fish tackle," and he moved forward to his work as if nothing had happened.

Blackbeard looked at him for a moment, and then exclaimed:

"Is he the Evil One, or am I a fool or mad?"

All that day Rory, on one pretext or another, kept in the tops.

But never a sight did he get of the "Porcupine," and he more than once cursed his stupidity in allowing himself to come on this foolhardy adventure.

He was now beyond all hope in the power of the pirates.

Should he succeed in his wild scheme of vengeance?

It looked almost a certainty that he would not.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MYSTERIOUS MESSAGE.

THE reader is by this time, no doubt, aware that Rory's unpleasant friend Nick was an effect of ventriloquism.

This power Rory possessed in its most perfect form.

He was, however, very careful to practice it rarely.

They had now been about six days out, and Rory proved himself to be not only a smart seaman, but as mad as a March hare, so that even Blackbeard himself was forced to play second to his mad tricks.

On the fourth day out, he called upon the crew to come out on deck and shorten sail.

They sent up word for him to shorten sail himself if he wanted to, as they were then engaged in looking on at a very interesting game of cards, in which two of their comrades were engaged, the stakes being all their prospective gain this cruise.

This message was accompanied by a fearful oath.

"They don't seem to be much afraid of you, notwithstanding your friend's power," said Blackbeard, with a grim, ferocious smile. "I'll warrant if I sent down to them, they'd be up in ten minutes."

"They will be up in less than that time," said Rory.

"Where are you going?"

"To send them up."

"What are you about?"

"You shall see."

Rory laughed a wild, reckless laugh, as he took up a ten-inch shell, and inserted a long fuse in it.

This he lighted, and walked down the companion-way to where the men were grouped round the two gamblers.

"You are fond of gambling," said Rory. "I'll bet you that when this shell goes off it will kill the lot of you and leave me uninjured."

He calmly put down the hissing shell in their midst.

The pirates gave one look, and then, with yells of terror, fled fore and aft, tumbling over one another in their haste to get out of the way.

Rory, the instant their backs were turned, ran about twenty feet and flung himself flat on his face.

He had timed the explosion by the length of the fuse, and knew he had about twenty seconds to wait.

His position was, comparatively speaking, a safe one, for shells invariably fly upwards when they burst, a fact which his pirate friends had never taken sufficient time to study; nor were they likely to do so in the present instance.

Nevertheless, it seemed an eternity to Rory ere, with a deafening roar, the shell exploded, tearing a hole through the deck, and filling the upper between-deck with sulphurous smoke.

Rory heard the iron hail whistling over his head, apparently not higher than an elevation of five or six inches.

It was a narrow escape, and nothing, save a determination to overawe these desperate men at any

cost, even though he should lose his life in the attempt, would have induced him to go through the ordeal.

He heard the shrieks and groans of the flying men simultaneously with the discharge of the shell, and above it all, he sent forth that wild peal of mocking laughter, which, if possible, added to the terror of the scene.

"Now to profit by their fright," he said.

Walking calmly past the writhing and groaning men, he ascended the companion-ladder as coolly as if nothing had happened, and walked aft.

"I told you that shell would hurt some of you," he said to the frightened groups of men. "Now, away aloft, topmen; stand by to take in topmast, and lower stunsails and rig in the booms."

Not a word was spoken by the frightened men, and they sprang up the rigging like monkeys.

As soon as the ship was got under plain sail, Rory called them aft.

"I hope you have had a lesson," he said. "Now I just want to give you a piece of advice. Smoke, drink, fight, gamble—do what you like, until you are called by your officers; then, by Heaven! you come quick, or I'll go down and empty my pistol in the powder magazine."

"You've got a hold over the crew that I could never get," said Blackbeard, scowling at Rory as they sat down to dinner.

It was evident that he was jealous of his first officer.

"Don't you worry about that," said Rory. "There's some one got a hold over me that he hasn't over you. Will you swap?"

"No," said Blackbeard, with a shudder.

"I don't believe he'd take you now," said Rory. "You're almost in my friend's clutches as it is."

"Am I?" said the pirate, with an oath. "By gosh, you are mistaken. As soon as this cruise is finished, I intend to take Annetta and bolt. I have made enough to start as a private gentleman of fabulous wealth. I've got enough to start all the priests in Spain praying night and day for the repose of my soul."

"And you think that will save you?"

"I'm sure of it."

Again came that thrilling laugh.

"You may laugh, curse you," cried the captain, with a fearful oath; "but I'll be revet."

Hardly had he finished speaking ere he pulled an enormous pistol from his belt and fired it point-blank at Rory.

He was so close that the young midshipman's clothes were singed with the flame, and he was almost blinded with the smoke.

For a moment he thought it was all over with him, and he was surprised that he felt no sensation of pain or sudden weakness.

"He's missed me," he thought. "Now to make the most of it."

When the smoke cleared away, the pirate captain saw his first officer slowly drinking a glass of grog.

"I told you never to be so foolish as to waste shots on me," he said.

"Ha, ha! ho, ho!" laughed Gumbo, as he stuffed his woolly head into the cabin.

"What are you laughing at, you black rascal?" cried Captain Blackbeard, who looked as if he was on the verge of *delirium tremens*.

"Laugh, Massa Blackbeard?" cried Gumbo, while his fat sides shook. "Me laugh to tink how Massa Captain him try to kill Massa Rory wif um silber bullet—ki-yah!"

And off went the negro again, to be followed by a still more terrible peal of laughter.

The captain poured out a tumblerful of brandy, and drained it with haggard face.

At this moment the second mate put his head down the hatchway.

"Sail ho!" he cried.

The captain rushed on deck, leaving Rory and his colored friend alone.

"How did you know he had a silver bullet in the pistol?" demanded Rory.

"Hush, massa!" said the negro. "I see um load um last night, and he swear to himself dat he killer you to-day. Dis lil'y child took de liberty ob unloading dem when de captain he fall sleep."

"That accounts for the fact that he did not kill me," said Rory.

"Yes, massa, him scared like de debbil."

"I think so."

"If um go on like dat I tink um die of fright for sure."

"I hope not, for that would spoil our plans. Did you find out anything?"

"Dis is in deck."

He handed Rory a gold locket.

Touching a spring, the face of a beautiful woman was revealed.

Rory turned pale. Then his eyes flashed fire.

"I am on the right track," he said.

"What, massa?"

"The face before me is that of my mother. Murderous, adulterous dog, dearly shall you pay for this!"

He placed the locket in his bosom and went on deck.

The pirates were scanning the ship eagerly as she came along before the wind, rolling about in an easy, unconcerned way, like a Dutch salt banger.

Others of the crew were dressing themselves in their best clothes, and arming themselves with jewel-inlaid pistols, daggers, and cutlasses.

"She's not worth the trouble of taking," said Blackbeard to Rory, as he came up. "However, some of our tigers haven't tasted blood so long that they are getting a bit thirsty, and I dare say there will be enough on board to make a bonfire."

He smiled so ferociously at this that Rory turned sick.

Unable to trust himself to reply, he took a telescope and examined the vessel through it.

In an instant his features underwent a change. Despite disguise, he knew the vessel.

It was his majesty's corvette "Porcupine."

For a moment a wild throb of joy quivered through his system.

The miscreants were at his mercy.

Then he reflected.

The pirates, well knowing the fate that awaited them, would not give in. The "Porcupine" would have to sink the "Tarantula."

Perhaps the first broadside would kill Blackbeard.

Then the secret that the young midshipman had devoted his life to unravel would never be known.

No! come what might, he must first worm the secret out of the pirate king, ere he lured him to his doom.

His mind was made up.

Turning sharply, he ordered the steersman to bring the helm up; at the same time he made the rest of the crew stand aloof.

"All right, Nick, you're a trump. Round it."

starboard braces there," he cried, "bear a hand, men!"

Loud murmurs arose, in which even Captain Blackbeard joined.

"Who are you, to take the command out of my hands?" exclaimed he, with an oath.

"Fool!" exclaimed Rory. "it is for your own good. Am I to be obeyed?" he cried, in a voice of thunder.

The men went reluctantly to the braces and rounded them in.

Scarcely had this been accomplished ere the ports of the merchantman flew open, and sail after sail was crowded upon her.

Simultaneously came a dull roar across the deep blue Caribbean, and the white cross of St. George floated slowly to her main peak.

A yell of surprise and fright rose from the pirates.

"Who is she?" exclaimed Blackbeard; and his query was followed by a dozen others.

"That is his majesty's ship 'Porcupine,'" said Rory, calmly. "If I hadn't spotted her she'd have sunk us in a single broadside."

"How did you recognize her?" asked the captain.

"Ask Nick; he'll tell you," said Rory, as he turned away, and a short, shrilly laugh followed his speech.

Captain Blackbeard turned white, and the hand that held his cutlass shook.

"Set the stun-sails!" he called out. "Cram every inch of canvas on her!"

"Let the stun-sails alone!" cried Rory; "we shall have more wind than we want presently."

Captain Blackbeard walked aft, with the sad conviction that his power had departed from him.

The wind gradually rose until it blew a perfect hurricane.

The two vessels were flying before it under goosewing maintop sails only, and with a tawny glare the sun went down, leaving them rolling along in the darkness.

Until half-past one o'clock in the morning his majesty's ship "Porcupine" followed a light.

When they came near it they found it was but a buoy sent afloat to mislead them.

"I know the tricks of these pirates," said the

first lieutenant. "He has hove to in the night-time in the hope that we will pass him."

His majesty's ship "Porcupine" was accordingly hove to also.

The sea and wind went down as the sun rose.

But not a sign of the pirate was visible.

Only under their lee, about half a mile away, the buoy floated, and they perceived that a piece of white cloth was attached to a stick in the center.

"Some new dodge of the villain to deceive us," said the lieutenant, who had been up all night.

"However, we must examine it. Perhaps we shall get a clew to something."

The gig was sent away and returned with the buoy.

To the top of the stick, near the flag, was fastened a note. On it was scrawled this—

Lat. 22° 1 min. 6 sec. North.

Long. 75° 40 min. 18 sec. West.

August 4th.

RORY.

"What the deuce does this mean?" cried the lieutenant. "It is mysterious."

CHAPTER V.

THE PIRATES' LAIR.

"We are well out of that scrape, Rory," said the pirate king to his first in command, as the "Tarantula," under the influence of a gentle sea breeze, ran up a long lagoon, which terminated some fifteen miles beyond in a range of low cliffs. "I have never been so near caught in my life, and I'm not too proud to say that my escape is due to you."

Rory smiled a bitter smile, but made no answer.

"So this is your home?" he said, a little later on.

"Yes," responded Blackbeard. "Here we have been for the last fifteen years. We stumbled on the place by chance, and no man-of-war ever dreams of looking for us amongst these low-lying sand-banks. Ha, if they would only take the trouble to look beyond those cliffs they might find themselves rewarded for their pains."

"How?"

"You will see when we come to it," said the pirate, grimly.

"You said you had amassed enough money to go away with Annetta. Who is she?" asked Rory.

"My daughter," said the pirate, with great suspicion. Then, as if the recollection was too much for him, he burst out into a torrent of confidence. "She puts me in mind of it," he said, by way of introduction, "and I never see her soft blue eyes that I don't think of the day that made me a free man and king of the ocean."

"You have time to tell the story while we are running up the sound," said Rory, with a sickening feeling at his heart.

"I was a boatswain then on board of one of his majesty's ten-gun brigs, the 'Goshawk.' We were on the lookout for gentlemen of my kidney on our way to New Orleans from Havana. The captain had his wife on board, and a pretty-looking girl she was. I have been in love many a time since, but I have never experienced the same passion that I did for Amanda Bulwar."

Rory started as if an asp had bitten him.

"What's the matter with you?" asked the captain.

"I thought I saw a breaker under the bow," said Rory. "Go on."

"The captain had given her a trip from Port Royal for the benefit of her health, and she had a little child with her, an adopted daughter or something.

"I used to follow her about like a dog, and one evening she chanced to slip with the lurch of the vessel and fell into my arms.

"*Carajo!* the mere contact with her set me on fire. I kissed her passionately—once, twice, thrice, ere I let her go, screaming.

"I was arrested, sentenced to six dozen, and degraded from my rank. Well, I would go through the same punishment again for the same number of kisses. But they had better left me alone.

"They little knew what a tiger they had on board in the person of Pedro Blackbeard.

"From that hour I hated Captain Bulwar with a hatred as strong as the love I bore his wife, and I determined upon revenge.

"Our ship's company had been greatly reduced by the number of men sent away on prizes. The rest of them I determined to win over.

"Little by little I made them discontented with their lot, pointing out to them that, with such a vessel under our command, we could live a wild, free life, and give up the dog's life we were leading.

"My plans were carefully laid. It was announced one day that the whole of the after guard were down with the yellow fever. It was nothing of the sort. I had poisoned the whole lot of them.

"This was the signal for our rising. It was on just such a night as this when I started aft to relieve the wheel. As I passed the man I hated most on earth, suddenly my knife leaped out of its sheath and was buried in his side.

"He fell to the deck. The officers rushed on deck, but they hadn't a chance. One after another, after a desperate fight—and I killed six of them with my own hand—they succumbed, and the ship was ours.

"We hauled down the British ensign, and, for want of a better flag, hoisted up one of my dandy captain's shirts soaked in blood.

"The crew unanimously elected me their leader, and we set to work to frame our new constitution."

"And the woman?" cried Rory, in a fearfully excited tone.

"Ah, poor thing! despite all I could do, I could never make her love me; and one evening, after we discovered this island, she broke away from the guards and jumped over the cliff. I was sorry for her, but, *caramba!* I soon found another to supply her place, and, on the whole, I was rather glad, as I had begun to get tired of her. The girl thinks I am her father, and I mean her to think so until we get away from this place. Were it not that the men are under the impression that she is my daughter, they might pay her more attention than would be pleasant. Everything is held in common in the pirates' lair."

Rory turned away ghastly white and sick.

At last he had found out the truth.

Years ago, when he was yet a mere child, an old sailor had informed him that the crew of his father's ship had mutinied and killed his father.

Now he was face to face with the man who had committed the act.

He drove his nails into the palms of his hands till the blood spurted out.

"Patience, patience," he groaned. "I have waited so long, I can wait a little longer."

But in his heart he swore a terrible vengeance.

Fortunately for him, the necessity of coursing the ship amongst the intricate channels between the

low cliffs took off the pirate's attention, or he must have noticed Rory's agitation.

Rounding a cliff, and steering through a channel which was guarded on each side by a formidable fort, there opened up a rich tropical panorama, the like of which Rory had never seen.

A tiny harbor, surrounded by a fertile valley, stretched out before them.

From some tall cliffs to the southward a cataract leaped, and the broad river, regaining its level, rushed smoothly on to the waters of the lake.

A number of dwellings of light canework occupied the table-land above, and a little way apart from them stood a fine stone building, from which waved the black flag.

This was the store-house, treasure-house, and magazine of the pirates. Nobody was suffered to reside in it except Blackbeard.

Its entrance was guarded by a drawbridge commanded by two canons, and sentries walked up and down with loaded carbines.

The whole beach became a living mass of color, as women and children, the former, alas! callous as to their shame, came down to greet the pirates.

In a few moments the sails were furled, the anchor dropped, and half the crew were scrambling off ashore by the boatload.

The poor things on shore were slaves, yet they seemed delighted to see their lords come back.

The pirate king, Rory, and Gumbo, went ashore in the first cutter.

As they reached the beach a tall, stately girl came down to meet them, and Rory thought she was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

"Can she be steeped in sin like the others?" thought Rory. "No, surely not; she is innocence itself."

She greeted her father haughtily; and at once, to the most casual observer, it became apparent that there was no love lost between them.

"Here, Annetta," cried the pirate captain, "I have brought you a new companion for your leisure hours; but I fear you won't like him, for your father is a fool to him in devilry."

The girl cast a contemptuous, scornful glance at our hero, and then suddenly blushed and looked on the ground.

"He does not look like a cruel man, father," said she.

"Only let some of the rascals make themselves troublesome to-night, and you will see," said the captain. "One man at a time doesn't satisfy him like it would your poor father; he kills them off by the dozen. Shells, eh?" and the pirate captain laughed long and loudly.

"You are not to believe all your father says, Annetta; "he is a fearful liar," said Rory, with the utmost composure.

A fierce oath rose to the pirate's lips, and his hand went down to his pistol.

"What's the good?" asked Rory, calmly, and with a curse the pirate captain rammed his pistol back again in his belt.

The girl looked surprised, but turned away, beckoning Rory to follow her.

This he readily did.

Space will not permit us to relate the horrible orgies that took place on the table-land above, on the occasion of Rory's first night ashore.

They sent up word that the first officer should come down and drink a loving cup with them, or they would come and burn the house over his head.

Down went Rory into the midst of them, rolling a barrel along, followed by Gumbo with a tub of flaming spirits slung over his back.

He rammed his pistol into the mouth of the cask, and thus addressed the mad group, while they remained frozen with fear:

"You threaten me with fire, do you? Drink, each of you, my health in that burning spirit, or I will see how many of you can stand gunpowder."

In fear and trembling each of that fierce band contrived to swallow some of the scalding liquid, cursing the day they had ever let a madman, who was protected by the Evil One, on board their ship.

Then, while hideous peals of laughter echoed through the air, the mad midshipman betook himself to the fort.

CHAPTER VI.

JUSTICE.

AGAIN want of space must be our excuse for not noting the daily incidents which marked Rory's growing intimacy with Annetta.

Let us hasten to the *denouement*.

They were standing together in one of the rooms of the fort, Annetta's hand clasped in that of her

lover, some four days after the events had occurred which were narrated in the last chapter.

"The tale you tell me is too horrible, Rory," she said. "Oh, I have often dreamt of such a world as that of which you speak. How shall we escape to it?"

He had been telling her the whole story of his vow, and how he had managed to make Blackbeard believe that he was protected by his satanic majesty.

"I have a plan, dear Annetta," he said. "I will kill this monster on some pretext or another, and assume command myself. Then it will be easy to deliver them into the hands of justice."

A cry, more like that of a wild beast than anything human, startled them.

Blackbeard stood before them with pointed pistols.

"You thought to fool Blackbeard, did you?" with an oath. "Die, dog! My pistols are not tampered with this time."

But even as he spoke he reeled sideways, and one pistol went off harmlessly.

Gumbo had stabbed him in the back.

He turned, fired the other pistol at the negro, and then dashed down the stairs.

"Fly, Massa Rory, fly!" cried the faithful negro. "Not the front way, the back."

"I'll not leave you here."

"You can do Gumbo no good; he hide—fly!"

They could hear the wild voice of the captain calling out that they were fooled and betrayed; then came angry cries and hurrying footsteps.

Flying along with Annetta by his side, they went they knew not whither.

They emerged upon a broad balcony overlooking the table-land and river.

Below them they could see the pirates swarming up, and fierce cries rent the air as their desperately wounded leader told them how they had been betrayed.

"Annetta," cried Rory, "better die with me than lead a life of shame."

"I am ready," cried the girl firmly.

In another moment the hurrying waters engulfed them both.

But scarcely had they disappeared beneath its surface, amidst a shower of bullets, when a thunderous report shook the valley, and cries of rage were changed to despair.

fre.

The "Porcupine" had found out the meaning of the mysterious message.

A roaring, swirling noise of rushing waters filled Rory's ears as he rose to the surface, with Annetta clasped to his breast.

A broken piece of timber struck him; he clasped it and drew the girl up.

"Alas!" she cried, "it is no use! We are going over the waterfall; nothing can save us. But look! see that other ship in the harbor. What does it mean?"

"It means that the work of my life is accomplished, and I die happy——"

The swirl of waters choked him, as with one mighty rush he and Annetta were whirled over the waterfall together.

* * * * *

The boats of his majesty's ship "Porcupine" picked up the senseless bodies of Rory and Annetta; and subsequently, after the surrender of the pirates, Gumbo was found in the magazine room, which he had intended to blow up ere, fortunately for himself, he fell senseless from his wound.

The stronghold of Captain Blackbeard was destroyed, and in its place at this day stands the pleasant port of Nassau.

Rory was rewarded with the command of the "Tarantula," which was bought in for his majesty's use, and not long after that he had the satisfaction of leading the fair Annetta to the altar.

"Rory," said she, some eight years after they were married, "you thought you married a portionless bride, didn't you?"

"What does it matter?" asked Rory.

"It matters a lot," she replied. "Our children are growing up, and it would be hard on them if they were left destitute."

"That is so," replied Rory; "but I have still health and strength."

"And I have this," she said, holding up a bit of paper.

"What is it?"

"Only the secret of the pirate's treasure," she said. "You are one of the richest men in England."

"Yes, I am," he replied. "Do you know why?"

"Why?"

"Because I have got you."

THE Young War Correspondent

OR,

THE CAMPAIGN IN TUNIS.

CHAPTER I.

THE CAMP.

THE shades of night had fallen with the suddenness natural to the latitude of North Africa, and darkness had spread over a wild and savage tract of land.

The lurid glare of flames breaking upon the obscurity showed that the spot was not wholly uninhabited.

There was indeed an encampment of soldiers in this usually lonely and deserted region; for three regiments of French Zouaves, under the command of General Barochet, had halted there for the night.

They formed part of General-in-chief St. Etienne's wing, and were on their way to join that commander, for the purpose of helping him to prosecute with additional vigor the Tunisian campaign, which the French Government had recently undertaken.

The soldiers composing these three regiments were broken up into separate groups, and each bivouacked round its own fire.

Some of the men, wearied by the march, slept soundly enveloped in their cloaks; others sat round the fire chatting and singing with the proverbial recklessness and gayety of soldiers who know not whether the morrow will see them alive, or capable of enjoying the pleasures of existence.

But, though each group numbered at least some thirty or forty men, there was one little fire at a distance from the rest, round which could be seen two persons alone.

They were a man and a lad.

The man was tall, broad shouldered, strongly built, and handsome. His great brown beard, regular features and imposing height would have attracted admiring attention anywhere; and certain national marks proclaimed him at once to be an Englishman.

His dress, moreover, which was not the dazzling Zouaves' uniform, but a compound of civilian and

martial costume, indicated that his presence in the camp was not due to the fact of his having joined the French army as a combatant.

He was, in a few words, Mr. Frank Wall, the war correspondent for one of the most important and entertaining English daily newspapers: one of those brave men who face the greatest fatigues, hardships and dangers, in order to keep quiet, stay-at-home folks well informed as to the doings of belligerents.

The lad, his companion—a smooth-cheeked boy of about seventeen, who scarcely looked his age—was his young brother, Sydney Wall.

The elder of the two sat smoking, and with a small writing-case on his knee, and pencil in hand, covered with marvelous swiftness sheet after sheet of paper.

"Nearly finished, Frank?" asked the lad, who, stretched out comfortably, alternately watched his brother and the movements of the neighboring soldiers.

"Yes, nearly finished, Syd," answered Frank; "a couple of lines more, and I shall have done for the night."

Two minutes elapsed, and the war correspondent, true to his word, put away his writing materials and rose to take a look round him.

"I don't like this at all," he said, with a slight frown. "These French fellows are taking a leaf out of the Irish book, and fairly boycotting us."

"Yes, indeed, they are," answered Syd. "I went forward to one of the tents just now to see Sergeant Dubois, but was ordered back immediately; I didn't like to interrupt you in your work by telling you, but I wonder what it means?"

"It means, my boy," said Frank Wall, gravely, "that you're beginning to experience some of the troubles of a war correspondent's life. For your sake I only wish to goodness I hadn't been weak and yielding enough to listen to you when you begged so hard to come with me to this beastly country."

"Why! what's the matter, Frank?" exclaimed the lad, with considerable surprise. "You don't suppose I mind this sort of thing? on the contrary, I like it, I assure you; and as far as our being put into coventry here, I don't care a fig."

"But I do," rejoined Frank, "and I mean to have it out with the general. It's his doing

know; I've met his lordship before, during the last Franco-Prussian campaign, and have learnt something of his sweet little temper."

"Why have we been ordered to camp out here away from the rest? We're in disgrace clearly, for something, but I should like to know the reason of it."

"So you shall, Syd, so you shall. Come with me; we'll insist upon seeing the general and demand an explanation. For the honor of England and its Press, I won't be treated in this way without at least a protest."

The two moved away from their fire and strode determinedly to the nearest group of soldiers.

"*Halt la,*" said an out-post sentinel, barring the way with his short Zouave musket, "*On ne passe pas; c'est l'ordre du general commandant.*" (No one is permitted to pass, it is the order of the general in command.)

"Oh, that's it, is it?" remarked Frank Wall, in excellent French.

"Yes, monsieur," answered the sentinel. "The general has given strict orders to prevent you from coming beyond the boundaries of your own camp-fire. I am on guard here, and it is my duty to obey my superiors."

"Of course it is," said Frank Wall. "I don't blame you in the least, but in spite of all you say, I have made up my mind to speak to the general in person, and you see if I don't have my way. Please allow me to pass; I will take all responsibility—you sha'n't get into trouble on my account."

"It is impossible," said the sentinel, respectfully but firmly. "My orders are clear and exact; I regret it, but I cannot allow you to move one step further."

The soldier, though he looked very fierce and military in his scarlet breeches, blue tunic and red fez—the Zouave uniform—was like the majority of the French, a short, spare-built man, betokening no great physical strength.

Had the sturdy Englishman so chosen it, he might have easily knocked him aside by one blow of his iron arm; but Frank Wall knew that it would be an injustice to punish an inferior who was merely after all discharging his duty.

"Let me see your lieutenant, then; I suppose you can do that?"

"Oh, yes, monsieur," said the soldier. "I am not forbidden to do that."

The officer was called, and looked sheepishly at the war correspondent. He was a friend of his, and felt disposed to be amicable; yet on the other hand, he was afraid of the general, whose orders to keep Frank Wall and his young brother apart from all communication were of the most peremptory and defined nature.

"Look here, Brisson," said Frank, "I know pretty well what all this means, but I'm not going to stand it. I don't care a pin about being left alone over there with my brother, but I consider the action of your general an insult to me, and I want to tell him so."

"My dear Wall," answered the lieutenant, "I beg you to believe that it is not my fault. I have no more influence or power than that sentinel has."

"Still I must ask you to do me the favor to send one of your men to General Barochet and tell him that I insist upon seeing him. Tell him that I *insist*, mind."

"Very well, I will do that; but I think you are a foolish fellow. You will only make the general more angry."

"Oh, I don't care for that—he can't hurt me," said Frank Wall, smiling. "Oblige me by doing what I ask, and leave the rest to me."

Lieutenant Brisson shrugged his shoulders, and dispatched a Zouave to the head-quarter encampment.

After a few minutes' interval, the soldier returned with a message to the effect that General Barochet "consented to see monsieur."

"Ah, that's all right!" said Frank. "If he had refused I should have felt inclined to force my way to him at any cost. Come along, Syd, let us face the lion in his den."

Passing by the different camp-fires, Frank and his brother were greeted by friendly looks and smiles on the part of the soldiers. The two Britons had rendered themselves extremely popular by their affability of manner, and the way in which they endured the fatigues of forced marches, so that not even the general's open display of animosity could altogether repress their demonstrations of esteem and regard.

The central camp was soon reached, and the two brothers were ushered into the presence of the com-

mander-in-chief, who sat surrounded by his principal staff officers.

General Barochet was a swarthy, ferocious-looking man, with bristling mustaches and beetling brows.

"You asked to see me, I believe?" he said brusquely, addressing Frank.

The young war correspondent was not in the least abashed by this reception.

He stood up erect and defiant, and his great heavy "blucher" boots; the "sombbrero" hat that he wore, together with the loaded revolver stuck in his leather belt, gave him something of a mediæval look.

"I did," he said. "I desire to know the reason of your strange conduct. Why have you given orders to your officers and soldiers not to mix with myself and my brother here?—I am not aware that we are lepers."

"You are something worse," answered General Barochet, frowning angrily. "See here," he continued, taking out a copy of the French *Figaro*, and unfolding it. "This is a translation of one of your articles, is it not?"

Frank Wall took up the paper and glanced at it carefully.

"It is," he said, laconically.

"Now you can understand my reasons," resumed the General. "A man who can dare say such things of the French army and its leaders ought to be punished and shunned."

"I have not said anything more than the truth, General Barochet," remarked Frank, quietly.

"The truth! Do you call it the truth to say that this war is an unjust one? Do you call it the truth to criticise the campaign as altogether useless and mismanaged?"

"I do," said Frank Wall, bowing politely.

"You hear him, gentlemen," exclaimed General Barochet to the officers sitting round him. "This is the way in which these Englishmen dare to talk about us—about us, the French, and the greatest military nation in the world!"

"Yes, you proved that at Waterloo, at Metz, Gravelotte, and other places, didn't you?" remarked Frank Wall, smiling sarcastically.

General Barochet bit his lip to conceal his anger and vexation.

"Such men as you ought not to be allowed to

follow an army," he said, "for the purpose of casting blame on brave men and brilliant commanders. If I had my way, I would have every war correspondent tried by court martial and shot like a mad dog!"

"Indeed, I dare say you would," said Frank Wall. "If there had been no war correspondents present, for instance, it would never have been known how you and your friend Marshal Bazaine came to yield up to the enemy, without striking a single blow, one of the strongest fortresses in France—I well remember the whole affair."

"Silence!" yelled General Barochet, fairly beside himself with rage. "I will not permit you to insult me in the presence of my officers. Men who are not themselves soldiers have no right to criticise and condemn those who shed their blood for the glory of their country. You are very clever with your pen, sir, but you take good care to retire to a safe place when the hour of battle is at hand. It is not for you, who have not heart enough to face the foe, to say one word in our dispraise."

"So you are good enough to think me a coward because I don't care to mix myself up in a cause which is not my own?" said Frank Wall.

"I can come to no other conclusion," answered the general.

"Then I will compel you to do so," said Frank Wall, firmly. "Gentlemen," he continued, addressing the staff-officers, "you have all heard the remark made by your general, and you are moreover aware of the indignity which he has put upon me by sequestering me from the company of even the meanest soldier. In your presence I publicly denounce him as a cur and a disgrace to the French army!"

There was a moment's pause, and every one was astounded at the daring of the young Englishman who thus challenged the commander-in-chief.

General Barochet sprang up from his camp-stool, livid with passion.

"You shall pay me for this!" he exclaimed, drawing his sword. "I will have immediate satisfaction."

"With the greatest pleasure in the world," said Frank. "Will any gentleman lend me his sword?—I have only a revolver."

A colonel of one of the regiments, who had his reasons for wishing the duel to

unbuckled his rapier, and handed it to the young war correspondent.

Others, however, thought proper to interfere.

"General!" they cried. "You must not fight! Your life is of too much value to be risked in this way!"

Young Sydney stood by slightly pale, but determined not to show his anxiety, and to support his brother to the last.

"Let me get at him!" shouted General Barochet, waving his sword and struggling with those of his officers who endeavored to prevent him from assailing his antagonist.

Frank stood up erect, prepared to ward off the first blow.

Suddenly, however, there was a movement in the camp, and muffled cries of "To Arms! To Arms!" could be heard.

An outpost sentinel rushed in almost breathless through running.

"The Arabs! The Arabs!" he cried. "To Arms! they are down upon us, and we have not a moment to lose!"

The news produced universal consternation.

General Barochet forgot his anger, faced by this sudden danger.

"Forward, Messieurs!" he said. "Each man to his post! Let the alarm be sounded, and gather the men up in line of battle—we must do our best, and trust to the fortune of war!"

Frank Wall, cool and tranquil amidst all the hurry and bustle, took out his revolver, and brandishing the Colonel's sword with his other hand, called out to General Barochet:

"I'll prove to you all the same that you are mistaken in my character. For this once I mean to engage in the fight, and I'll show you what an Englishman can do."

"And so will I show them what an English boy can do!" shouted Sydney, following his brother, as the latter flew forward to join the foremost in the fray.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIGHT.

The look out sentinel had spoken the truth.

A hostile tribe of Kabyles, or Berbers as they are called, had been informed by their spies

of the advance of General Barochet's troops, and seized the opportunity of swooping down upon them when an attack was least expected.

This method of warfare was much practiced by the Arabs, who have always preferred a *razzia*, or guerrilla surprise, to an open and pitched battle.

The three regiments of Zouaves were, however, strong, well trained, and well armed; and General Barochet, though not a skilled officer in the sense of a Von Moltke, knew how to dispose his men in the case of a skirmish.

With the rapidity of lightning the soldiers had fallen into the ranks; the drums and bugles sounded the alarm, and the air was noisy with the clang of weapons.

The Kabyles came on with the eagerness of a pack of wolves starved out in their mountainous regions, and roving over the plain with ferocious rapacity.

Their swarthy faces found a striking contrast to their white flowing garments and waving *burnouses*.

"Fire!" cried General Barochet, as soon as the enemy was within gunshot.

A volley let off with admirable precision by the French, shook the atmosphere and caused considerable havoc among the foe.

But the Kabyles, led onward by a tall and powerful-looking marabout, or prophet, were not to be dismayed. On they came, fiercely brandishing a variety of warlike implements, which seemed to include everything, from old and obsolete arquebuses, glittering cimeters, to pikes, and South African assegais.

The fight very soon became a terrible hand-to-hand one.

"Keep close together, my men!" commanded General Barochet. "Do not forget that union is strength!"

The Kabyles had gathered in large numbers and fought like demons.

"Allah guard us!" they shouted as their war-cry. "Let us die rather than be defeated and have to implore *aman*."

Aman is the word employed by the Arabs to indicate submission.

Frank Wall was as good as his promise.

Nothing daunted him; he seemed everywhere,

and urged onward the soldiers by his example and inspiring appeals.

But though he held a revolver and sword in his hands, he did not fire upon the enemy; nor did he use his gleaming blade of steel save to ward off the blows of one or two Kabyles who came unpleasantly close to him.

He wished to show General Barochet that he was not afraid of battle; yet, at the same time, it was not his desire to kill men who had done no injury either to him or to his country.

Sydney Wall followed close upon his brother's heels, but being younger and rasher, he was disposed to make free use of his pistol.

"Do not fire upon them!" cried Frank to him. "It's no business of ours to slay these men; if you can't show your courage by merely defending yourself, you had better retire to the rear—in fact, a lad like you ought not to be risking his life here at all!"

"All right; let me be," answered Sydney, with a laugh. "I'll do as you tell me, and won't fire, only let me enjoy the fun with you."

The skirmish, in the meanwhile, raged with considerable fury.

The Kabyles were being shot down like skittle-pins, but the Zouaves were, on their side, being killed and mutilated in large numbers.

"Keep together! keep together!" was the one command uttered by General Barochet and his officers.

Frank's towering stature should have made him an easy mark for the enemy, but he seemed to have a charmed life, and beyond receiving a mere scratch, was unhurt.

He had several chances of killing his opponents, but steadily refused to avail himself of them.

Once, the tall marabout, who was the leader of the Kabyles, singled him out for attack, charging him furiously with his curved scimitar.

Frank wrested the weapon out of his hand, seized him round the body, and, by means of a Cornish wrestling trick he had learnt, threw him helpless on the ground.

Some French soldiers rushed at the fallen man, and would have killed him, but the Englishman kept them back.

"You sha'n't hurt him," he said to them. "He

attacked me, and not you, and if I choose to let him go, 'tis my affair."

"Rise, and be off with you," he then said to the Kabyle leader.

The latter looked up with undisguised wonder at this strange mercy, but, nevertheless, made haste to take advantage of it by flying.

It soon became apparent that the Arabs had got the worst of it.

The majority of them had given the "game" up, and were running away in all directions.

Only a few of the most daring and zealous held their ground, fighting like wild beasts at bay.

Frank continued to lead on the soldiers, who followed him cheerfully, and General Barochet, grimy with sweat and the smoke of powder, eyed him with a glance full of malignancy and hate.

Suddenly a gleam of triumph shot into his eyes.

He had thought of a ready means of vengeance.

Just as Frank was advancing to scatter the remaining band of Kabyles, aided by the Zouaves, who were cheering their young leader lustily, the general commanded them to stop.

His tone was so imperious that the soldiers obeyed immediately.

The result was that Frank, who was rushing on heedless of everything, found himself quickly surrounded by the enemy, and, in spite of resistance, a prisoner.

Sydney would have dashed after his brother, only Lieutenant Brisson, who was near him, caught hold of him and prevented him from doing so.

"You young fool," he said, "what are you trying to do? You'll only be made a prisoner yourself."

"I don't care," said Sydney, struggling to get away. "How can I leave my brother?"

"Be quiet; I'll see what I can do," answered the French officer.

Lieutenant Brisson then went up to General Barochet, and, saluting him, said:

"General, let me have twenty men, and I will guarantee to rescue Monsieur Wall."

The commander-in-chief smiled a fiendish smile.

"You are mad," he said, brutally. "I will not allow one single soldier of mine to risk his life for such a purpose. The enemy is in full flight now, and let us be thankful that we have won."

"Monsieur Wall has behaved nobly," rem

trated Lieutenant Brisson. "His bravery has contributed greatly to our victory; he is well worth a trifling sacrifice."

"Yes, general," shouted a crowd of Zouaves, in chorus; "give us permission to rescue him; it is not too late; they cannot be very far off!"

"Oh! do, sir," implored Sydney, whose young heart was in despair.

"Silence! Not another word!" said General Barochet, harshly. "I will not consent to any such thing. If Monsieur Wall is captured, it is his own fault; he is not a soldier, and I am not responsible for him."

"You are a coward and a murderer!" shouted Sydney. "Had it not been for you, he never would have been taken."

General Barochet winced at the lad's earnest and bitter reproaches.

"Remove this foolish boy," he said, "or I may be tempted to knock him down."

"You! you villain! You daren't do it!" exclaimed Sydney, stoutly.

Some of the soldiers, at their chief's command, led the lad away. They all, in their hearts, agreed with him, and detested their chief, but the fear of a court-martial, and the summary penalty of death, caused them to hold their tongues.

Sydney was naturally inconsolable.

"My poor Frank!" he exclaimed, giving way to his sorrow. "What will become of him, now that he has been left so treacherously to the mercy of those Arabs?"

"Comfort yourself, my lad," said the good-natured and kindly Lieutenant Brisson to him. "I daresay your brother will be better off under the Kabyles than he would be with our general here, who has more reason than ever to dislike him."

"Yet, they say," said Sydney, "that these Arabs are a cruel race, and that they show no quarter to their prisoners."

"True; but you must remember, my boy, that your brother is an Englishman, and entitled to consideration on that account. Another thing, though he took part in the fight, he struck no blows, and this fact will stand him in good stead."

"Heaven suffer it to be so!" said Sydney. "I hope he may be spared to punish the treachery of the general; but, if he perishes, he shall not want

an avenger. It shall be my task, young though I be, to seek a just retribution."

Lieutenant Brisson smiled at the boy's earnest words, but did not answer him.

When the roll-call came to be made, it was found that the engagement with the Kabyles had been no light matter.

Numbers of Zouaves lay dead on the plain, never again to take their places in the ranks; and the list of wounded and disabled was considerable.

"*Sapredie!*" swore General Barochet. "Those savages fight like so many devils. Here's a sacrifice of life! Another of these skirmishes, and St. Etienne will get but a poor reinforcement from me."

It was impossible that the wounded men should continue the march to Kairouan, whither the troops were journeying.

"You will have to form an ambulance, general," said one of the staff-officers. "These poor fellows must be taken back to the hospital at Oran, under an escort."

"I suppose they must," answered General Barochet. "Curse it! I can ill spare any of my men, but it is evident that some of them must go back."

It was decided that the wounded should be conveyed in litters to the neighboring town of Boscara, and from there to the military hospital at Oran.

As soon as Sydney Wall heard of this intention, he determined to form one of the ambulance.

By doing so he would have a far better chance of gaining tidings of his brother, and, moreover, the presence of General Barochet was too hateful for him to bear it any longer.

Lieutenant Brisson, to whom he communicated his idea, resolved to keep him company, and on his applying for the post, easily obtained command of the escort.

On reaching Boscara, therefore, fifty Zouaves were told off from the rest, and ordered to take charge of the wounded soldiers under the leadership of Brisson.

"So you're going to stay behind, are you?" said General Barochet to the English lad, with a sneer.

"I am," answered Sydney. "Do you object?"

"Object! No! You may go to the devil! I'm only too glad to be rid of such an impudent young scoundrel!"

"Scoundrel, yourself!" exclaimed Sydney, passionately. "Though we part for the present, do

not think that either I or my brother will forget you. We have a debt to pay, and we shall pay it, never fear. Give us time; that's all."

General Barochet scowled fiercely and walked away. He would have liked to have struck the lad, but he felt that his animosity had already led him too far.

"Go your way!" shouted Sydney after him. "We shall meet again—when my brother is free once more—and then look to yourself!"

CHAPTER III.

THE CAPTIVE ARAB MAIDEN.

LIFE at Boscara was by no means unpleasant.

Save for the anxiety which Sydney felt on his brother's account, he might have enjoyed himself very well.

Lieutenant Brisson was a good friend to him, and did all he could to cheer the boy.

By the surgeon's orders the soldiers were not allowed to be removed from the town, as their condition was too precarious, so that the return to Oran was postponed till the wounded men should gain sufficient strength to endure the fatigues of the journey.

Sydney, in the meanwhile, took frequent excursions out of the city, but, in spite of his repeated inquiries, did not succeed in gaining any news of Frank.

One evening, as he was coming back from one of his solitary rambles, he found himself suddenly surrounded by a party of men, dressed in the garb of servants to some wealthy Moor.

"What do you want with me?" asked Sydney.

"You must come with us, my pretty lad," said one of the men. "Do not resist, and no hurt shall befall you."

"But why should you desire me to come with you?" persisted Sydney. "I do not know you."

"It is no matter; you must accompany us. It is our noble master's wish, and he has sent us to waylay you."

"Who is your master?" asked Sydney.

"The most noble Ali-bel-Haddad, bachaga of Boscara."

"I have never heard of him; you must be mistaken, my good fellows. He has bidden you to look for somebody else and not me."

"We are not mistaken," said the man, who appeared to be the leader of the party. "It is you and no other whom we want."

"But, surely, it cannot be so," insisted Sydney. "I feel positive you are mistaken."

"Enough has been said," remarked the leader peremptorily. "Come with us with good grace, or we shall have to bind you."

Sydney looked round him for help, but saw the road was deserted, save by the men who surrounded him, and that resistance would be worse than folly.

He had a revolver concealed under his jacket, but with a wisdom superior to his years, he resolved not to make use of it till he could do so effectually.

A few yards distant there was a closed carriage.

Sydney was thrust in it, and the party drove off.

During the journey, which lasted an hour, the lad tried, by artfully put questions, to make his captors talk, but they were too cautious, and replied evasively.

At last the carriage stopped before a flat-roofed Moorish mansion, the gates of which were thrown open to admit the vehicle.

"Is this the place where you are taking me?" asked Sydney.

"This is the country residence of our master, the most noble Ali-bel-Haddad," was the answer. "It is here that he dallies with his favorite slaves, cheered by the sight and odor of beautiful plants and flowers."

A servant was ready, waiting to receive the party.

"You have brought him safe with you, I see," he remarked to the man who had acted as leader.

"Not a hair of his head has been touched."

"It is well, Ben Osmin; our lord will be rejoiced. The youth is truly comely, and hath eyes as bright as stars, and cheeks, the bloom of which is as soft as that of the damask rose or of a fledgling maid."

Sydney, who understood a good deal of the language of the country, felt strongly inclined to punch the old servant's head for talking of him as though he were a girl.

He was led into a room, fitted up with every luxurious appliance it is possible to conceive.

"My master will join you here in a few minutes. I will go and advise him of your arrival," said the servant.

Sydney looked round him in amazement.

A moment later the door opened, and a tall, portly Moor, dressed in rich Eastern garments, and resplendent with flashing jewels of many hues, entered the room.

A long, gray beard enshrouded his face, and gave him at once an aspect of combined dignity and authority.

He looked as though accustomed to command, and he obeyed without a murmur.

"Perhaps you will inform me, sir," said Sydney to him, "why I have been brought here against my will? I have not the honor of knowing you."

The Moor indulged in a little laugh.

"You do not know me?" he said. "I am Ali-bel-Haddad, bachaga of Boscara, and the wealthiest and most powerful effendi in the whole district."

"Well," answered the English lad; "and supposing you are; what has that got to do with me? What do you want with me?"

"I want to make your fortune, my pretty youth. I have long wished to have in my service a European boy of your pleasing presence. Understand that you are henceforward attached to my household."

"I!" exclaimed Sydney, surprised. "No such thing! I am nobody's servant, and I don't intend to be. I am a free-born Englishman, and you dare not keep me here against my will."

Ali-bel-Haddad laughed once more.

"Pooh!" he said. "In turbulent times such as these, the rights of nationalities are disregarded, and I am powerful enough to do as I please. I saw you the other day in the street, took a fancy to your looks, and swore I would have you as one of my household. You shall be my page, therefore."

"And what if I say I decline to be anything of the kind?"

"It is all one; you are here, and you cannot leave so. Should you endeavor to resist, so much the worse for you. By clapping my hands, I can summon twenty attendants who will seize you, bind you, if I desire it, kill you."

Sydney saw that he was a prisoner beyond all hope, and stood silent, lamenting his unhappy fate.

"If, on the other hand," continued Ali-bel-Haddad, "you are a good, wise boy, your lot in life shall be a truly fortunate one. Ali is no tyrant; he is a kind master, and those whom he loves share his greatness."

"What would you have me do, then? I am ill-suited to serve a master," said Sydney. "In my own country I have been accustomed to be waited on myself."

"It is good; I did indeed think you were of gentle birth, and I am the better pleased to hear that this is so," replied the Moor.

"Although you shall be my servant, your task shall not be that of a menial. I design you for my seraglio, where you shall recline at the feet of my favorites, and amuse them by your boyish light-heartedness. You will particularly devote yourself to my beautiful Zaida, the Arab maiden whom I love best of all."

"I am not clever at amusing a pack of women," answered Sydney. "If that's what you want me for, you'd better let me go."

"Never! You shall stay, I tell you, and obey my bidding. What have you to complain of? Your days shall be gladdened by the presence and company of the most beautiful women the human eye could desire to rest upon."

"But supposing that any of your favorites should fall in love with me, and prefer me to you?" asked Sydney. "How would you like that?"

Ali-bel-Haddad shook his sides with an uncontrollable burst of merriment.

"The boy is apt!" he exclaimed. "He is endowed with a sense of humor, and I have chosen well. I have no fear of my slaves losing their hearts to you," he said, patting Sydney's cheek. "Women do not care for children in that way, and you are a mere child."

"Child, indeed!" exclaimed Sydney, highly disgusted. "Place a sword in my hand and you shall find I am as good a man as you, any day of the week."

"We shall see, we shall see," said the Moor, who seemed to enjoy the fun immensely. "At any rate, you know now why you are here. I will leave you for the present, but my servants shall conduct you to the bath, and after you have rested and been re-

freshed, you shall be taken to the chamber of my peerless Zaida. Farewell till we meet again."

"Good-bye, old cockalorum," said Sydney, bowing with mock ceremony.

Nothing seemed to be able to keep the lad's buoyant spirits in a depressed condition for long; and, besides, the adventure smacked of a novelty highly palatable to his youthful fancy.

Nevertheless, he determined to keep a watchful lookout, so as to avail himself of the earliest opportunity offered for making his escape.

After a luxurious bath and a choice repast, Sydney expressed himself quite ready to put himself at the disposal of the "ladies."

He was accordingly led to the Moor's seraglio or harem, where, in a magnificently decorated chamber, sweet with the subtle odors of perfumes, reclined a maiden of truly exceptional beauty.

This was Zaida, the Arab girl, and the Moor's favorite of favorites.

Though surrounded by so much splendor, she seemed, however, anything but happy.

A clearly perceptible expression of sadness showed that she was a captive, and that, like a caged bird, she sighed to shake her pinions and fly forth in freedom.

As Sydney entered she looked up listlessly, eying the lad in silence.

"What a charming creature!" said Sydney to himself.

"The old boy has got good taste, anyway, I must give him credit for that."

The two gazed at each other without speaking, whilst the servant who had attended Sydney retired to a corner of the room, where he posted himself on guard.

"I hope I am not intruding upon you," said Sydney, at last, explaining himself as best he could in Arab, "but I have been sent here to you."

"You are a foreigner?" said Zaida, growing suddenly interested. "Your speech, your aspect, tell me so."

"I am English born and bred," answered Sydney. "I dare say you are surprised to see me here, but I can assure you that I had no idea of coming. I was made a prisoner, and was brought by force."

"I, too, alas! am a captive," said Zaida, with a

sigh. "I have been immured within these walls for many a sad and weary day!"

"Poor girl!" thought Sydney, "what an old villain that Moore must be. I wish I could help her. Those bright eyes wet with tears seem to go through me."

"Do you speak French?" asked Zaida.

"Yes, that I do," answered Sydney. "And deal better than I can Arab."

"It is well," said Zaida, replying in the French tongue. "We can now talk without being understood by yonder attendant."

"She's not only pretty," thought Sydney, "but she's as sharp as a needle as well."

"Young sir," said Zaida, "you have a good face, and I feel that I can trust you. Besides, I have met Englishmen before at Oran, and have always found them to be brave and honorable."

"You need not have any doubts about me," answered Sydney. "I am not in the pay of the old ruffian who keeps you caged up here, I can assure you."

"Well, then, know that I have also, like you, been brought here by treachery. My father is Si-Mokrani, the chief of the religious order of Rhaman-el-Gho-bini. He is away fighting for his country against the French troops, and Ali-bel-Haddad has taken advantage of his absence to have me seized and conveyed hither.

"He has persecuted me with his attentions ever since the first day that I was unfortunate enough to fall into his clutches, but I have sworn to die rather than yield to him."

"Rely upon me to protect you to the utmost of my power," said Sydney. "I am but a boy, it is true, yet I am older and stronger than I look, and he shan't lay a finger on you while I am here to protect you."

"You must do nothing rash, or he would have you slain without remorse. Now that you have been sent to me almost as it were by the prophet, you must contrive to escape together from this place and join my father."

"For the present, however, nothing can be attempted. You must dissemble, and profess to be contented with your lot."

"I will do anything to be of service to you, maiden. Sydney Wall is body and soul at your disposal. Command me!"

"You will not have cause to regret befriending me. My father is tall among his fellow-men, and will know how to repay those who have helped his only daughter in her distress."

"I desire no reward save your own smile, that is enough for me."

Zaida smiled upon the lad as though giving him his deserts in anticipation.

She had lost all her previous apathy, and was now cheerful almost to gayety.

Presently Ali-bel-Haddad himself entered the chamber, and was surprised to notice the change in Zaida.

"Ha!" he exclaimed. "The boy's mirth is as good as the whole of the haki's medicine box. What did I say? I knew I was right in procuring his services."

"Yes," said Sydney, "and I like my duties very well indeed, thank you. Have you any more favorites of the same pattern as this one?"

He winked surreptitiously at Zaida, to signify that he was playing his part.

"I have twelve more," answered the Moor. "They are all beautiful, though they cannot compare with my sublime Zaida, who is more beautiful than the sun by day, or the moon by night. But you shall see them, and cheer them by your merit."

"All right, my antiquated Blue-beard," responded Sydney.

"Can you sing?" asked Ali-bel-Haddad.

"Like Sims Reeves and Santly rolled up in one."

"It is good, though I know not who these self-same persons whom you have named may be. Perchance, too, you can dance?"

"I have been the delight of many a ball-room. You should see me waltz, that's all! It's a treat."

"Better and better," said the Moor. "I have found a treasure. You shall accompany me at once to the hall where my remaining favorites sit eager for the arrival of their lord and master, and here you shall entertain us with your songs and dances."

"Go on then, lead the way, my venerable Morton, and I will follow."

Sydney turned round to Zaida, and winking once shyly at her, prepared to make himself as agreeable as he could to Ali-bel-Haddad, who little

suspected what good use the lad had already made of his time.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FLIGHT.

THE days passed, but Sydney was still a prisoner in Ali-bel-Haddad's mansion.

True to his word, the lad had dissembled, and entirely succeeded in winning the good graces of the old Moor.

Ali-bel-Haddad, like all Eastern potentates, was a tyrant, but if nothing crossed him he could be perfectly amiable and generous.

The English boy's good spirits were a source of diversion to him, and his songs and "break-down" dances threw the Moor into ecstasies of delight.

Not a day passed without Sydney's receiving gifts in the shape of money and jewelry; and as for the luxuries of life, he fared a great deal better, it may be imagined, than he would have done had he remained with Lieutenant Brisson and the ambulance.

Nevertheless, the thought of his lost brother, Frank, frequently disturbed the lad, and he longed to be free so as to set out in search of him.

"Are you not ready yet to try our escape?" he would whisper to Zaida. "Let us risk it. What is the good of stopping any longer here?"

"Wait," she would reply. "Have patience; it will only be a day or two more."

At last one evening she said to him:

"Hold yourself prepared: we will fly to-night."

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Sydney, dancing about with delight. "I am glad it is to be so soon. I was getting awfully sick of that pampered old Moor and his crew of fat wives. What am I to do? How are we going to manage it?"

"We must exchange dresses," said Zaida. "I will put on your clothes, and you will dress in mine. Not these," she said, pointing to her flowing robes, such as those worn in Eastern harems, "but in the simple European garb I wore when I was seized and brought here."

"But what's that for?" asked Sydney.

"To render detection less possible. Besides, I am dark and taller than you are; I shall make a splendid man, while you will look a very pretty

blonde girl. I have bought a wig for you from the hairdresser who comes here, and you must put it on."

"Very well, what then?"

"I have woven a strong ladder out of linen; we must elude the vigilance of the servants, get to the orchard wall at the back, scale it with our ladder, and then we shall be free."

"Free! all right, I am ready for anything. Let me have the clothes, and I will put them on and let you have mine."

"They are all ready for you. I will fetch them."

In a few seconds the parcel containing the necessary attire was in Sydney's hands.

"Dress in an hour's time," said Zaida, "and let me have your clothes as soon as you have done so. We must be bold and determined."

"If there's any fighting to be done, don't you be afraid. I'm more than a match for half a dozen of these scoundrels."

"I will be brave," said Zaida. "I am prepared to risk everything rather than prolong this hateful captivity."

"Very well, then—in an hour's time," said Sydney, joyful at the thought of being able to free himself and the Arabian girl. "Won't the old boy be savage when he finds us gone? I shouldn't care about being near him! He'll storm and rave like a madman!"

The time for attempting a flight was excellently chosen, for Ali-bel-Haddad had been summoned to Boscara, and was expected to spend the night there.

Before the hour had elapsed, Sydney was dressed in Zaida's clothes.

Underneath his dress Sydney concealed the revolver which he had managed to keep secretly in his possession, and being well supplied with ammunition, he felt bold and confident.

"I can easily manage six of them if it's necessary," he thought, patting affectionately his six-chambered pistol, "and I daresay I should have time to reload in case of extra danger."

Sydney, who had free access to Zaida, managed to convey unseen his clothes, and the Arab girl lost no time in getting ready.

A few moments later she joined her companion, and the two prepared to attempt their escape.

In order to reach the orchard it was, however,

necessary to pass an anteroom, where a fierce Arab—one of Ali-bel-Haddad's soldiers—was posted as sentinel.

The Arab was well armed, so that his presence was an obstacle of some danger.

"Let me go first and dispose of that fellow," said Sydney. "We sha'n't be able to get out otherwise."

"Very well," answered Zaida, "but for heaven's sake be careful. Remember that we are lost if we fail."

"Never fear," said Sydney. "Englishmen do not know what failure means."

He went forward boldly and faced the sentinel, who in his turn regarded with amazement the youth, dressed as he was in woman's clothes.

"Let me pass, or you are a dead man," said Sydney, leveling his revolver at the Arab.

The latter, who saw at once that a flight was being attempted, quickly took out a pistol and a knife from his belt, and dashed at the lad.

But before he could even come near him, Sydney fired, and the sentinel fell with a heavy thud on the floor.

"He's done for!" said Sydney. "Well, it can't be helped. Come on, Zaida, the way is clear—let us fly."

The orchard was reached, and the lad found no difficulty in scaling the wall by means of a ladder which Zaida had with cunning forethought provided.

Before the alarm could be given in the house, the two had succeeded in making their escape, and were hurrying with all speed across the country.

"Nothing could have been better arranged," said Sydney. "Zaida, you're a clever girl."

"Don't call me a girl," answered Zaida. "Don't you see that I am a man; it is you who are the maiden."

"Oh, ah, I forgot," said Sydney, laughing as he shook the skirts of his dress. "But where are we going now, Zaida?"

"To join my father."

"Yes, but where may your father be?"

"Near the Djctel Urlate mountains. That is where he and his troops hide."

"Is it far from here?"

"Three day's journey; I am acquainted with the shortest paths, and we shall be able to reach

horses at the next village we come to. We have plenty of money, so that we need not fear any further obstacles."

"How pleased your father will be to have you with him once more," said Sydney with a tinge of sadness. "I wish I could find my poor brother in the same way."

He had often spoken to Zaida about Frank, and the Arab girl was well acquainted with his story.

"Do not despair," said Zaida. "You will doubtless hear tidings of him when we have reached our destination. My father is in communication with every leader of the insurgents, and his influence shall procure your brother's release."

"Yes, unless they have shot him already."

"Do not give way to such gloomy thoughts. My countrymen are at war with the French, but they bear no ill-will to the English."

"Heaven trust that it is so! Zaida, you are as good as you are beautiful, and I never have been so happy as when in your society."

"Don't talk rubbish," answered Zaida, playfully.

"Remember that you are a girl now, that such avowals are not consistent with maidenly modesty."

Swift-footed Arab horses were purchased at a little village on their way, and having procured at the same time a plentiful stock of provisions, Zaida and Sydney set out across winding paths well known to the Arab maiden, in the direction of the Djebel Urte mountains.

Only one adventure disturbed the tranquillity of their journey.

As they approached the mountainous district, a leopard met them, but Sydney's revolver made quick work of him, and with the aid of Zaida he took off the beautiful skin of the animal and kept it as a trophy.

At length, after searching for traces of the Arab insurgents, Zaida one evening perceived the charred remains of a camp-fire.

"Ah! we are near them!" she exclaimed joyfully. "See, these traces are fresh; the embers are almost still smoldering!"

"So they are," answered Sydney, "and—hallo! what's this?" he said, picking up a sheet of white paper which lay on the ground.

"The living Jingol! if this isn't my brother's writing, my name isn't Sydney! Look,

Zaida, this is good, honest English, and I'll swear my brother has written it!"

"How glad I am!" exclaimed Zaida. "He is alive, and with my father! We have clear proofs of this."

"Yes! Heaven be praised! Come along, Zaida, we must not rest until we have found them."

At the end of their day's ride, their hearts leapt at the sight of the bright flames issuing from a number of camp-fires.

"There they are!" exclaimed Sydney.

"I shall see my father once more!"

"And I shall join dear old Frank!"

"Oh! what joy!"

"Kiss me, Zaida; kiss me for luck."

"So I will, Sydney, and heartily too."

And there within sight of their friends, the brave Arab girl and the plucky English lad embraced each other in the fullness of their happiness.

CHAPTER V.

THE ARAB CAMP.

THERE was no disappointment in store for Zaida and Sydney.

The camp proved no other than that of Si-el-Mokrani, Zaida's father, and this personage turned out to be, greatly to Sydney's surprise, the very marabout whose life had been spared by Frank Wall during the skirmish between the French and the Arabs.

The meeting between father and daughter, brother and brother, was, as may be imagined, an occasion of extraordinary rejoicing.

"Well done, youngster," said Frank Wall, when he had heard Sydney's story. "I didn't give you credit for so much determination and judgment. I am proud of you, my boy."

As for himself, Frank had not a great deal to tell. On his being taken prisoner, the Kabyle leader recognized him at once, and showed his gratitude by treating the Englishman with every possible kindness and attention.

Si-el-Mokrani pressed Sydney to his breast with the affection of a father.

"Zaida has told me all," he said. "She owes her life, and what is dearer to her, her honor, to you. Command me in everything; my fortune and power are at your disposal."

But there were other things to be brought about just then, besides mere rejoicing.

The French had taken Karioran, and were now preparing to attack the insurgents in their mountainous retreat.

Scouts had informed the Kabyle leader that a considerable force, commanded by General St. Etienne and General Barochet, was in the immediate neighborhood; and Si-el-Mokrani had determined therefore to fight them.

"We are strong enough to wage battle," he said to Frank, whom he looked upon as a wise counselor, "and I am, moreover, told that the French soldiers are broken down by fever and the hardships they have undergone."

"Fight by all means," answered Frank. "If you stay where you are much longer provisions will run short; more French troops may arrive, and you might find yourself cut off on all sides."

"You speak well," said the Arab chief. "This very night I will give the order to march forward, and we will, if possible, take the enemy by surprise."

In accordance with this determination, preparations were made for the coming engagement, and the Arab camp was all astir with excitement.

"I shall have the pleasure, in all probability, of meeting our old friend, General Barochet, very soon," said Frank to Sydney, "and this time I don't mean to let him escape. I shall run him through, and punish him for his treachery."

"If you don't, I will," said Sydney. "Just mind that."

Fierce and resolute, the Arabs mustered together for the approaching fight. They were eager to be avenged on the French, and there was not a man who was not ready to lay down his life if needs be to insure victory.

The march of the troops was silent and well-disciplined, nor was a halt made till the encampment of the French soldiers was almost within gun-shot.

"Take care of my Zaida," said Si-el-Mokrani to Sydney. "I intrust her to your charge; you are her best protector, and you will see that no harm comes to her."

"I promise you that I will be laid dead at her feet before a hair of her head is touched," answered Sydney.

"It is good, you have taken a great weight of anxiety from me. Should I fall in battle, fly with

her to Oran. She is heiress to much wealth, and needs an honest man as protector."

"I will be that man; you may rely on me."

After this, with a loud-sounding war-cry, the Arabs, led on by their chief, attacked the French camp.

The French fought steadily and well, but they had been taken this time completely by surprise, and were, in consequence, at a disadvantage.

In the midst of the fight Frank Wall sought out General Barochet, and at last came face to face with him.

The French general staggered at the sight of the Englishman.

"Do you know me again?" said the latter. "I can see by your terror you do. Now then, be a man, and defend yourself!"

General Barochet pulled himself together, and the swords of the Englishman and the Frenchman clashed ominously.

Frank Wall was not a very skilled swordsman, but he was strong and active, and he was burning with rightful anger.

"You thought you had got rid of me forever," he said, "but you see that there is a Providence which protects men who have been wronged. Take that!"

With a herculean stroke of his arm he knocked his opponent's sword away from him into the air, and next plunged the blade of his own weapon into the body of his enemy.

General Barochet uttered one solitary groan, and fell to the ground a dead man.

"My debt is paid," said Frank Wall, retiring into more sheltered quarters.

The battle raged for some hours, but at last the French were compelled to beat a retreat, and Si-el-Mokrani claimed the victory.

All was joy in the camp, for the Arabs could now leave the mountains without danger.

"I will take Zaida back to Oran," said the Arab girl's father to Frank and Sydney, "and the same opportunity will be a good one for you to return with me."

"I am ready to go wherever Zaida goes," said Sydney. "She has promised to marry me to-day. You have no objection, sir, have you?"

"You have deserved her," replied Si-el-Mokrani. "No one has a better claim to her affections."

I am sure you will make her happy. Besides, I am glad to find a protector for her, for, though our chance is a desperate one, it is my duty to remain in the field to the last."

So it was decided they should all journey back together, and Frank Wall announced it as his intention to follow up the Tunisian campaign on the Arab side, instead of the French.

Sydney was a little desirous of accompanying his brother, but Zaida interfered—"Have you not promised to protect me?"

"Of course I have," answered Sydney.

"Then you must stay with me."

"I will stay on one condition."

"Well?" asked Zaida.

"That you will marry me as soon as the war is over."

"But we are both so young," remonstrated Zaida.

"Never mind; the younger the better; besides, we shall be older by the time things are settled, and your father comes back. Do you consent? If you don't I shall——"

Zaida sealed his lips with a kiss, and Sydney took her answer to be satisfactory.

The war in Tunis is still progressing, and the victories on either side fluctuate. In the meanwhile Frank Wall continues sending his brilliant letters to his newspaper at home; and his brother Sydney, snugly established at Oran, is waiting impatiently for the campaign to come to an end, so that he may be wedded to Zaida, the beautiful and wealthy Arab maiden.

[THE END.]

GASTON GARNE, the author of this story, is also the author of the following stories published in THE BOYS OF NEW YORK POCKET LIBRARY: No. 165 "The Haunted School-House," No. 155 "The Lieutenant's Revenge," No. 149 "The Dwarf Bell-Ringer," No. 142 "The Black Hand," No. 134 "The Diamond Bullet," No. 125 "The Mystic Seven," No. 118 "Lost in the Sewers," No. 112 "The Maniac Scout," No. 101 "The Cavern of Death."

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